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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 001164

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/WE: LEVIN; EUR/SE; EUR/ERA; DRL/IRF: ABRAMSON;  
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TAGS: [EU](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [TU](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN OPEN TO TURKEY'S EU BID

REF: A. VATICAN 252

[1](#)B. STATE 59846

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) HOLY SEE COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR TURKEY JAN PAWLOWSKI REAFFIRMED MARCH 5 THE VATICAN'S OPENNESS TO TURKISH EU MEMBERSHIP, DESPITE THE IMPRESSION OF OPPOSITION GENERATED BY THE HOLY SEE'S CONTINUED EFFORTS TO INTERJECT A REFERENCE TO EUROPE'S CHRISTIAN ROOTS IN THE EU CONSTITUTION. NEVERTHELESS, THE HOLY SEE HAS CONTINUING CONCERNS WITH RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN TURKEY, PARTICULARLY THE LACK OF JURIDICAL STATUS FOR THE EXERCISE OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTS. THE POPE REINFORCED THESE CONCERNS WHEN THE NEW TURKISH AMBASSADOR PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS THIS MONTH. AMBASSADOR DURAK SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WAS NOW "THE MAIN ISSUE" IN TURKEY-HOLY SEE RELATIONS, BUT HE MAINTAINED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT TREATED ADHERENTS ALL FAITHS EQUALLY, AND WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. THE VATICAN HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT TURKEY WOULD SATISFY THE HOLY SEE'S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CONCERNS BY FULLY MEETING THE EU'S COPENHAGEN CRITERIA. SUCH STEPS, COUPLED WITH THE HOLY SEE'S GROWING INTEREST IN OUTREACH TO THE MUSLIM WORLD AND ITS ONGOING CALLS FOR RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING, MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE HOLY SEE WILL VOICE ANY OPPOSITION TO TURKEY'S CANDIDACY. END SUMMARY.

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TURKEY: COMPATIBLE WITH THE EU?  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) HOLY SEE COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR TURKEY JAN PAWLOWSKI TOLD US MARCH 5 THAT THE HOLY SEE HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO EU MEMBERSHIP FOR TURKEY, AS LONG AS THE GOT FULLY SATISFIED THE EU'S COPENHAGEN CRITERIA ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. CONCERNS ABOUT THE VATICAN'S POSITION SURFACED LAST YEAR WHEN THEN VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN SUGGESTED THERE SHOULD BE GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITATIONS ON EUROPE, IMPLYING THAT TURKEY SHOULD NOT MAKE THE CUT FOR EU EXPANSION. TAURAN HAD ALSO STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROPEAN (READ: CHRISTIAN) VALUES IN THE NEW EUROPE. A SUBSEQUENT VATICAN STATEMENT LINKING A LACK OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN TURKEY TO ITS EU CANDIDACY, COUPLED WITH THE POPE'S CONTINUING CALLS FOR RECOGNITION OF THE CHRISTIAN ROOTS OF EUROPE IN THE NEW EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION LED MANY TO BELIEVE THE HOLY SEE WAS OPPOSED TO TURKEY'S EU BID.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM THE ISSUE - NOT GEOGRAPHY OR ISLAM  
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[1](#)3. (C) PAWLOWSKI REAFFIRMED TO US WHAT TAURAN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AFTER THE ISSUE CAME UP IN MAY: AS FAR AS THE VATICAN IS CONCERNED, TURKEY IS "ENTITLED TO JOIN THE EU," BUT IT SHOULD FIRST IMPROVE ITS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. ACCORDING TO PAWLOWSKI, THE VATICAN WAS NEVER OPPOSED TO TURKEY'S EU MEMBERSHIP, AND ITS GEOGRAPHY AND PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM POPULATION WERE NOT DISQUALIFIERS IN THE HOLY SEE'S EYES. BUT, HE EXPLAINED, THE HOLY SEE WAS -- AND REMAINS -- CONCERNED ABOUT A LACK OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS IN TURKEY. PAWLOWSKI SAID THE HOLY SEE "THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RAISE THE ISSUE" BECAUSE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS AN IMPORTANT VALUE FOR THE EU. "MEMBER STATES SHOULD BE AWARE IF A CANDIDATE COUNTRY IS COMING UP SHORT," HE EXPLAINED. AFTER MAKING MEMBER STATES AWARE OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SHORTCOMINGS, PAWLOWSKI SAID THE HOLY SEE DIDN'T SEE ITSELF IN ANY WAY AS A FINAL ARBITER OF EU MEMBERSHIP. THE VATICAN KNOWS HE SAID, THE OVERALL ISSUE IS ULTIMATELY "NOT FOR US TO DECIDE."

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CHRISTIAN ROOTS, MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY  
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[1](#)4. (C) PAWLOWSKI INSISTED THAT ONE COULD RECOGNIZE THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN EUROPE'S PAST AND ITS CURRENT

RELEVANCE WHILE STILL ENCOURAGING A HARMONIOUS MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-RELIGIOUS EUROPEAN SOCIETY "THE HOLY FATHER HAS ALWAYS SAID THAT EUROPEAN SOCIETY MUST BE INCLUSIVE, AND WELCOME THE STRANGER," HE SAID. PAWLOWSKI CONTENDS THAT THIS INCLUSIVITY HOLDS TRUE FOR THE ACCESSION OF A PRIMARILY MUSLIM NATION LIKE TURKEY INTO THE EU, AS MUCH AS IT WOULD FOR INDIVIDUAL IMMIGRANTS OF ALL FAITHS. (COMMENT: THE HOLY SEE FINDS ITSELF IN A DIFFICULT BALANCING ACT HERE. PAPAL

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NOTABLE GAP" BETWEEN EUROPEAN CULTURE, WITH ITS PROFOUND CHRISTIAN ROOTS, AND MUSLIM THOUGHT. WHILE THE HOLY SEE MAY BE "OPEN" TO ISLAM AND WANT TO PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN EUROPE, IT IS ALSO NOT EAGER TO SEE ITS MORAL INFLUENCE IN ITS BACKYARD DILUTED FURTHER THAN IT ALREADY HAS BEEN. THE VATICAN'S GOAL IS AN OPEN, MULTI-RELIGIOUS, AND TOLERANT EUROPE IN WHICH THE HOLY SEE CONTINUES TO HAVE AN INFLUENTIAL MORAL AND CULTURAL VOICE. END COMMENT.)

15. (C) FOR NOW, ACCORDING TO PAWLOWSKI, TURKEY STILL HAS A LOT OF WORK TO DO ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. HE SAID THE HOLY SEE HAS HEARD MANY PROMISES, BUT LITTLE ACTION FROM THE GOT, AND NOTED THAT THE POPE HAD RAISED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY WHEN THE NEW TURKISH AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE, OSMAN DURAK, PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS RECENTLY. THE POPE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY WERE ENSHRINED IN THE TURKISH CONSTITUTION, BUT SAID THAT SUCH GUARANTEES ONLY BECAME TRULY RELEVANT "ONCE THEY HAVE BECOME PART OF ORDINARY LEGISLATION AND THEREFORE OF THE LIVING FABRIC OF SOCIETY." HE ADDED THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO "RECOGNITION ON THE PART OF THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH'S JURIDICAL STATUS" IN TURKEY. THE POPE STRESSED THAT THE CHURCH DID NOT "SEEK SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT," BUT MERELY FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS. PAWLOWSKI TOLD US THAT THE RIGHTS AT ISSUE WERE OFTEN THOSE RELATING TO PROPERTY; HE GAVE AS AN EXAMPLE A CONTINUING DISPUTE INVOLVING SOME FRENCH PRIESTS IN TURKEY WHO HAD BEEN STRIPPED OF THEIR LAND BY A TURKISH COURT.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM KEY ISSUE FOR TURKISH AMBASSADOR  
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16. (C) THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE VATICAN'S ATTITUDE TO TURKEY'S EU ACCESSION WITH TURKISH AMBASSADOR DURAK WHEN THE LATTER PAID AN OFFICE CALL MARCH 15. DURAK SAID HE HAD PRESSED TURKEY'S EUROPEAN CREDENTIALS WHEN HE FIRST MET THE POPE IN FEBRUARY, NOTING THAT HIS COUNTRY'S EUROPEAN LAND MASS WAS GREATER THAN THAT OF BELGIUM. DURAK SAID THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ISSUE WAS NOW THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE TURKEY-HOLY SEE RELATIONSHIP. HE INSISTED THAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WAS ALREADY GUARANTEED BY THE TURKISH CONSTITUTION, BUT THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WANTED LEGAL MEANS TO SECURE AND PROTECT PROPERTY AND "EXPAND THEIR HOLDINGS." ACCORDING TO DURAK, THE GOT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE THE VATICAN EVERYTHING IT WANTS WITHOUT "REWRITING THE CONSTITUTION," BUT WITH "SOME ADJUSTMENTS" TO CURRENT REGULATIONS WAS HOPING TO FIND COMMON GROUND. DURAK'S DEPUTY TOLD DCM EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT THE LEGAL PROTECTIONS THE HOLY SEE IS SEEKING WERE ALSO NOT PROVIDED TO MUSLIM GROUPS BECAUSE OF THE SECULAR NATURE OF THE TURKISH CONSTITUTION.

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TIP AND SAUDI SLAVERY  
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17. (C) DURING THE COURTESY CALL, THE AMBASSADOR ALSO BRIEFED DURAK ON THE EMBASSY'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS, ENCOURAGING HIM TO ENGAGE WITH THE HOLY SEE'S DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY ON THE EFFORT. HE NOTED THE RECENT G/TIP/EMBASSY VATICAN INITIATIVE TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF PAPAL Nuncios AND BISHOPS' CONFERENCES AROUND THE WORLD ON THE ISSUE, AND THE SUCCESS OF THE RECENTLY-LAUNCHED INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM) PROGRAM DEVELOPED WITH THE HELP OF THE EMBASSY AND WITH PRM FUNDING (REF B). DURAK SEEMED RECEPTIVE ON THE ISSUE, AND SAID HE HAD SEEN SUCH "HUMAN SLAVERY" WHEN HE WAS AMBASSADOR IN SAUDI ARABIA FROM 2001-2004. HE ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE SOME 6 MILLION FOREIGN WORKERS THERE FROM VARIOUS NATIONS WHO ARE EFFECTIVELY SLAVES, WITH LITTLE OR NO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. ACCORDING TO DURAK, SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NEVER ABLE TO EARN THE MONEY NECESSARY TO LEAVE SAUDI ARABIA AND RETURN HOME, WHILE OTHERS ARE ACTUALLY HELD -- ALMOST PHYSICALLY -- AGAINST THEIR WILL.

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COMMENT: VATICAN WARY BUT WELCOMING  
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18. (C) THE HOLY SEE CANNOT HELP BUT BE WARY OF THE PROSPECT OF TURKEY'S LARGE ISLAMIC POPULATION ENTERING INTO GREATER EUROPE. ITS BATTLE AGAINST ENCROACHING SECULARISM ON THE CONTINENT IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH WITHOUT OPENING AN AMBIGUOUS SECOND FRONT AGAINST A COMPETING RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE. NEVERTHELESS, THE HOLY SEE'S POSITION ON TURKEY'S EU BID IS

CONSISTENT WITH ITS CONSTANT MESSAGE OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE; THE VATICAN CANNOT STAND IN THE WAY OF A POLITICAL DECISION IN FAVOR OF TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP ON RELIGIOUS OR

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NFLUENCE WITHIN A EUROPE  
WITH INCREASINGLY FEEBLE CHRISTIAN ROOTS, THE HOLY SEE WILL  
NOT PROVIDE COVER FOR XENOPHOBIC OPPOSITION TO TURKEY'S  
CANDIDACY WHEN THE DEBATE HEATS UP. IF TURKEY DOES  
EVENTUALLY JOIN THE EU, THE HOLY SEE CAN BE COUNTED ON TO ACT  
AS A FORCE FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY  
COUNTING ON ITS EU MEMBERSHIP TO PROTECT CHRISTIAN RIGHTS AND  
INTERESTS IN TURKEY.

NICHOLSON

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